



## AGENDA ITEM 7

METROPOLITAN  
TRANSPORTATION  
COMMISSION

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### *Memorandum*

TO: MTC Advisory Council

DATE: March 28, 2008

FR: Tom Spiekerman

RE: 511 Transit Website Revision and Trip Planner Replacement

#### **511 Transit Program**

The 511 Transit program includes the transit website at [www.transit.511.org](http://www.transit.511.org) and the 511 TakeTransit Trip Planner<sup>SM</sup>, as well as the data collection, storage and maintenance for transit service data for all participating Bay Area transit agencies. Since 1997, MTC has contracted with bd Systems, Inc. to operate and maintain the 511 Transit project. MTC issued a Request for Proposals in March 2006 for a contractor to operate, maintain, and further develop the project beyond that existing contract's expiration. As a result of the procurement, bd Systems (which was acquired by SAIC in 2006) was selected as the program contractor, and began the new contract on October 1, 2006. The new contract term is four years (with an option to extend for an additional six years in increments of MTC's choosing).

#### **Transit Trip Planner Replacement**

One of the key contract tasks for fiscal year 2006-07 was the evaluation of options for replacing the aging 511 TakeTransit Trip Planner<sup>SM</sup>. This evaluation was in progress and discussed when staff last provided a status update to the Advisory Council in January, 2007. Staff is attending the April 9<sup>th</sup> Advisory Council meeting to provide an update on the outcome of this evaluation, and subsequent development work on the new trip planner and 511 Transit website, and to request your input as we prepare to roll out the new trip planner and website revisions.

The transit trip planner currently in use on 511 Transit is obsolete, and is no longer being supported for upgrades and bug fixes by its originator (The Southern California Association of Governments). In January 2007, as one of its contract tasks, bd Systems completed a review of options for replacing the trip planner, and recommended licensing and integrating a Commercial Off the Shelf (COTS) trip planner into the 511 Transit website. This trip planner is also used at several other major transit properties worldwide, including London, Melbourne, Australia, and a new launch planned for Chicago RTA this Spring. Work on integrating this new trip planner with MTC's Regional Transit Database and 511 Transit website began in April, 2007.

## **Website Redesign and Development**

Concurrent with the new trip planner incorporation, MTC and its contractor, bd Systems, have been undertaking a redesign and redevelopment of the 511 Transit website. This development is intended to improve the website's functionality and ease of use, based on suggestions and feedback from website customers, MTC advisory committees, transit agencies, and other stakeholders. The result of this effort is a new website layout and design that addresses many of the changes and improvements requested by the stakeholders. These include easier website navigation, an improved trip planner, more complete and better mapping of transit information, and wider website pages on which to view the transit information.

The new website will include a fair amount of newer technology, some of which is based on interactive mapping and program coding to minimize jumping between website pages. While this offers a number of advantages for website usability, some of it is not fully accessible on electronic screen readers for those whose sight impairments may require screen reader assistance. As a result, MTC will be continuing to maintain a live version of its current 511 Transit website, which is screen reader accessible. Both the all-new website and the current 511 Transit website will continue to operate in parallel, each with a version of the new trip planner included.

The launch of the all-new website is planned for mid-May 2008 as a Beta site, which will initially include major features (trip planning, schedules and route maps, agency profiles, fare information), but still have some of its other features (popular destinations, Bay Area transit overview, and some other descriptive sections) being completed for rollout in July, 2008. During this period from May to July 2008, the existing 511 Transit website will remain as the primary MTC public website for transit information, and the new website will be offered as a Beta version to be tried out and reviewed by the public before its official launch in July.

Also in July, the screen reader version of the new trip planner will be completed and incorporated into the existing 511 Transit website. Therefore, by early July, there will be two complete, separate versions of the Transit public website:

- 1) The all-new website and trip planner that will be demonstrated for you today;
- 2) The existing 511 Transit website, which will remain live, and serve as the screen reader Accessible version of the public website, and also include the new trip planner.

Due to the newer technology being used for this website development, the backend transit data and systems can be maintained in one place for both of these two website interfaces. This provides the additional advantage of having a separate website available if one of the two versions encounters technical difficulties or down time.

A new transit agency Customer Telephone Information Center version of the trip planner will also be rolled out in May, using the new transit trip planner. This will enable transit agency call centers to use the new trip planner, on a new and streamlined website interface that is optimized for call center interaction, with customers who call for this information. MTC has been working with its transit agency partners to review and test this call center trip planner version.

At the April 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, we would like to hear input from Advisory Council members, regarding your thoughts about the new website design that we are presenting, and key issues of importance to you regarding the 511 Transit website.